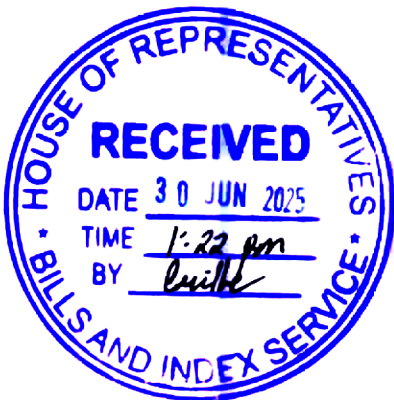




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 347



Introduced by Representative
ZIAUR-RAHMAN ALONTO ADIONG

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill, known as the "**Last Mile Schools Act**," is designed to address the education challenges faced by children in geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA) of the Philippines. The objective of this bill is to ensure equitable access to quality education by establishing public basic education schools, referred to as **Last Mile Schools**, in these areas, as well as to improve access to essential services such as electricity, road infrastructure, and information and communications technology (ICT).

In the Philippines, there are numerous communities in remote, hard-to-reach areas where children still face significant barriers in accessing basic education. Many of these communities are also home to Indigenous Peoples (IPs), who face additional challenges due to their geographical location and cultural heritage. Schools in these areas often suffer from a lack of resources and infrastructure, making it difficult for children to receive an education that meets their basic learning needs.

The **Last Mile Schools Act** aims to resolve these issues by establishing schools that will serve students in the most disadvantaged and remote regions of the country. These schools will cater to children living in areas that are difficult to access due to poor road conditions, inadequate facilities, and a lack of teachers. The bill ensures that the establishment of these schools is done with full respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371).

Additionally, the bill calls for the collaboration of various government agencies to provide the necessary infrastructure and support. The **Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)** will be tasked with constructing access roads to these remote areas, while the **Department of Energy (DOE)** and the **National Electrification Administration (NEA)** will ensure that these schools are equipped with electricity. Furthermore, the **Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT)** will work to install ICT infrastructure to support modern educational methods in these schools.

The bill also sets out clear criteria for identifying which schools qualify as **Last Mile Schools**, including factors such as the number of classrooms, the student population, and the percentage of Indigenous learners. Schools that meet these criteria will receive the attention and resources needed to ensure that children in these regions receive the education they deserve.

The **Last Mile Schools Act** also establishes a roadmap for implementing a five-year school-building program aimed at improving the facilities of these schools. To fund the implementation, the bill proposes that the necessary budget be included in the annual General Appropriations Act, ensuring sustained government support for the program.

This bill was passed on third reading by the House of Representatives during the **Nineteenth Congress** and received broad support from lawmakers due to its importance in promoting inclusivity in the education sector. It addresses not only the infrastructural gaps in the educational system but also the broader issue of educational equity in the Philippines. The bill underscores the government's commitment to ensuring that every Filipino child, regardless of their geographical location or socioeconomic status, has the opportunity to receive quality education.

With the implementation of the **Last Mile Schools Act**, we will take a significant step towards bridging the educational gap in the country, empowering our youth, and ensuring a brighter future for the most marginalized sectors of society.



REP. ZIAUR-RAHMAN ALONTO ADIONG
1st District, Lanao del Sur



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**TWENTIETH CONGRESS
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HOUSE BILL NO. 347

Introduced by Representative Ziaur-Rahman Alonto Adiong

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING PUBLIC BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN
GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED AND DISADVANTAGED AND CONFLICT-
AFFECTED AREAS, PROVIDING ACCESS ROADS LEADING TO LAST
MILE SCHOOLS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Last Mile Schools Act”.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the declared policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

The State recognizes and promotes the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities within the framework of national unity and development. To this end, the State shall recognize the right of indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child.

The State shall improve the quality and access to basic education of children in the far-flung, isolated, disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas, as well as those in Last Mile Schools, by investing on school infrastructures and roads leading to the said public schools.

SEC. 3. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act:

a.) Basic education refers to the intended basic learning needs which provide the foundation on which subsequent learning can be based. It includes kindergarten, elementary and secondary education as well as alternative learning systems for out-of-school learners and those with special needs;

b) Basic Education School refers to learning institutions accredited by the Department of Education (DepEd) to deliver services addressing the intended basic learning needs of students;

c) Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs) refer to the same definition stated in Section 3h, Chapter 2 of Republic Act No. 8371, or “The Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997”, which describes it as “group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied,

possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains"; and

d) Last Mile Schools refer to public basic education schools with gaps in resources and facilities which are located in geographically isolated and disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA).

SEC. 4. Establishment of Last Mile Schools. – The Last Mile Schools are hereby established, under the administration of the DepEd, to cater to the basic education of learners throughout the country's GIDCA.

The establishment of Last Mile Schools in locations situated by the ICCs shall be undertaken in consideration of the rights of the IPs, in accordance with Republic Act No. 8371.

SEC. 5. Access to Education. – The DepEd shall collaborate with concerned national government agencies for the delivery of the infrastructures necessary to ensure access to education in the Last Mile Schools, namely:

- a) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), for the construction of access roads leading to the location of Last Mile Schools;
- b) Department of Energy (DOE) and National Electrification Administration (NEA), for the installation of electricity; and
- c) Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), for the installation of information and communications technology.

SEC. 6. Criteria. – The indicators used in identifying a public school to be included among the Last Mile Schools are the following:

- a) Having less than four (4) classrooms;
- b) With makeshift or nonstandard rooms;
- c) Absence of or irregular electricity;
- d) Have not been allocated funds for repairs or new construction projects in the last four (4) years unless destroyed;
- e) With travel distance of more than one hour from the center of a city or municipality, or with difficulty of terrain or of such nature as to be considered having difficulty of access to existing educational institutions;
- f) Having multigrade classes or rooms;
- g) With less than five (5) teachers;
- h) Having a student population of less than one hundred (100) learners;
- i) With more than seventy-five percent (75%) IP learners;
- j) Having such other circumstances that make it difficult for learners to access school facilities.

SEC. 7. Implementation. – The school building program for the Last Mile Schools shall be established and completed within a period of five (5) years after the effectivity of this Act.

To facilitate synchronicity, harmony and complementarity of plans, resources and efforts of both the national government and the local government units (LGUs) towards the attainment of the objectives of this Act, the DepEd shall plan and implement the programs, projects, and activities that address the needs of the Last Mile Schools, in coordination and collaboration with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, DSWD, DENR, NDRRMC, and concerned LGUs.

SEC. 8. Appropriations. – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the budgets of the concerned Departments, agencies and Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall, in consultation with the NCIP, DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, DSWD, DENR, NDRRMC, and Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, formulate the rules and regulations implementing the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 10. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 11. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, orders and rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 12. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,